

Publication number : 2001-209058

Date of publication of application : 03.08.2001

Int.Cl. G02F 1/1339 G02F 1/13

5 Application number : 2000-017507

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Date of filing : 26.01.2000

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DEVICE FOR MANUFACTURING LIQUID CRYSTAL PANEL

15 [Abstract]

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To surely pressurize substrates to obtain a specified gap while the substrates are positioned with good accuracy and maintaining parallel to each other.

SOLUTION: One pressurizing plate 1 is moved upward and downward by a
20 lifting member 4 so that one substrate A sucked and held on the pressurizing and sucking face 1a of the plate 1 approaches nearer to the other substrate B sucked and held on the pressurizing and sucking face 2a of the other pressurizing plate 2. While the proximity state is maintained, a flexible material 4 is elastically deformed to slightly move and tilt the one
25 pressurizing plate 1 and one substrate A so that the one substrate A is

uniformly pressurized along the face of the other substrate B by the flat pressurizing and sucking face 1a of the pressurizing plate 1 made of a rigid body.

5

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[Claims]

[Claim 1] A device for manufacturing a liquid crystal panel which pressurizes two upper and lower substrates A and B to have a predetermined gap, and bonds the two substrates A and B by hardening an adhesive C between the two substrates A and B, The device comprising: a pair of upper and lower pressurizing plates 1 and 2 being formed as a rigid body and having flat pressurizing adsorbing surfaces 1a and 2a on which the substrates A and B are respectively adsorbed; and a lifting/lowering member 3 for supporting any one of the pressurizing plates 1 and 2 to be freely reciprocated in the up/down direction with respect to the other plate, one pressurizing plate 1 being supported on the lifting/lowering member 3 to be freely inclined and transferred by elastic deformation of a flexible material 4.

[Claim 2] The device of claim 1, wherein a closed space 5 is formed between the lifting/lowering member 3 and the flexible material 4, and the flexible material 4 is elastically deformed so that one pressurizing plate 1 can be transferred in the up/down direction toward the other pressurizing plate 2 by a rise of an internal pressure of the closed space 5.

[Claim 3] The device of either claim 1 or 2, wherein a fluid 6 controlled in temperature is supplied to the closed space 5, for raising the internal pressure of the closed space 5.

[Claim 4] The device of any one of claims 1, 2 and 3, wherein any one of the pressurizing plates 1 and 2 is supported to be adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction with respect to the other plate.

[Title of the Invention] Device for Manufacturing Liquid Crystal Panel

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Field of the Invention] The present invention relates to A device for
5 manufacturing a liquid crystal panel which does not scatter spacers in a
non-adhesive area between two substrates such as a panel for a liquid
crystal projector, and more particularly to, A device for manufacturing a
liquid crystal panel which precisely position-determines two upper and
lower substrates, pressurizes the two substrates to have a predetermined
10 gap, and bonds the two substrates by hardening an adhesive between the
two substrates without positioning spacers.

[0002]

[Description of the Prior Art] A conventional liquid crystal panel is
manufactured by spreading an adhesive between substrates in a frame
15 shape, and scattering spacers on the whole surfaces thereof, so that both
substrates can be easily pressurized to have a predetermined gap. Since
an image transmitting a panel for a liquid crystal projector is enlarged, the
spacers existing in a screen area are also enlarged. Therefore, the spacers
cannot be scattered inside the spreading position of the adhesive.

20 **[0003]**

[Problems to be Solved by the Invention] However, when one substrate is
pressurized toward the other fixed substrate by a flexible material such as a
thin plate or a film, the center portions of the substrates cannot be
supported by the spacers. Accordingly, the center portions of the
25 substrates are caved, and the center portion of the panel has a concave

surface without the predetermined gap.

[0004] An object of the present invention as recited in Claim 1 is to precisely position-determine both substrates, maintain the two substrates in parallel, and pressurize the two substrates to have a predetermined gap. In

5 addition to the object of the present invention as recited in Claim 1, an object of the present invention as recited in Claim 2 is to pressurize both substrates in micron units to have a predetermined gap without operating a lifting/lowering member. In addition to the object of the present invention as recited in Claim 1 or 2, an object of the present invention as recited in
10 Claim 3 is to prevent deformation of the upper and lower substrates by temperature rise. In addition to the object of the present invention as recited in Claim 1, 2 or 3, an object of the present invention as recited in Claim 4 is to position-determine the upper and lower substrates and pressurize both substrates with a predetermined gap by using one
15 apparatus.

[0005]

[Means for Solving the Problem] In order to achieve the aforementioned objects of the present invention, A device for manufacturing a liquid crystal panel as recited in Claim 1 includes: a pair of upper and lower pressurizing
20 plates being formed as a rigid body and having flat pressurizing adsorbing surfaces on which the substrates are respectively adsorbed; and a lifting/lowering member for supporting any one of the pressurizing plates to be freely reciprocated in the up/down direction to the other plate. Here, one pressurizing plate is supported on the lifting/lowering member to be freely
25 inclined and transferred by elastic deformation of a flexible material.

In addition to the structure of Claim 1, in The device for manufacturing the liquid crystal panel as recited in Claim 2, a closed space is formed between the lifting/lowering member and the flexible material, and the flexible material is elastically deformed so that one pressurizing plate can be transferred in the up/down direction toward the other pressurizing plate by rise of an internal pressure of the closed space.

In addition to the structure of Claim 1 or 2, in The device for manufacturing the liquid crystal panel as recited in Claim 3, a fluid controlled in temperature is supplied to the closed space, for raising the internal pressure of the closed space.

In addition to the structure of Claim 1, 2 or 3, in The device for manufacturing the liquid crystal panel as recited in Claim 4, any one of the pressurizing plates is supported to be adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction to the other plate.

[0006]

[Operation]

In the present invention of Claim 1, one pressurizing plate is transferred in the up/down direction by a lifting/lowering member, and one substrate adsorbed on a pressurizing adsorbing surface of the pressurizing plate approaches the other substrate adsorbed on a pressurizing adsorbing surface of the other pressurizing plate. In the approach state, a flexible material is elastically deformed to slightly incline and transfer one pressurizing plate and the other substrate. Accordingly, one substrate is evenly pressurized on the flat pressurizing adsorbing surface of the pressurizing plate formed as a rigid body along the surface of the other

substrate. In addition to the structure of Claim 1, in the present invention of Claim 2, a closed space is formed between the lifting/lowering member and the flexible material, and the flexible material is elastically deformed so that one pressurizing plate can be transferred in the up/down direction toward the other pressurizing plate by rise of an internal pressure of the closed space. Since the flexible material is elastically deformed by rise of the internal pressure of the closed space, one pressurizing plate is downwardly transferred in micron units toward the other pressurizing plate. In addition to the structure of Claim 1 or 2, in the present invention of Claim 3, a fluid controlled in temperature is supplied to the closed space, for raising the internal pressure of the closed space. Therefore, the upper and lower substrates are cooled with one pressurizing plate therebetween. In addition to the structure of Claim 1, 2 or 3, in the present invention of Claim 4, any one of the pressurizing plates is supported to be adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction to the other plate. The upper and lower substrates are precisely position-determined by adjusting and transferring any one of the pressurizing plates in the horizontal direction to the other pressurizing plate. Thereafter, the position-determined upper and lower substrates are pressurized to have a predetermined gap.

[0007]

[Embodiment of the Invention] The preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings. As illustrated in Figs. 1(a) and 1(b), an upper pressurizing plate 1 is supported in a floating island shape on a center of a bottom surface of a lifting/lowering member 3 with a flexible material 4 therebetween, and a

lower pressurizing plate 2 is fixed not to be movable. In a state where two upper and lower glass substrates A and B are adsorbed on flat pressurizing adsorbing surfaces 1a and 2a of the pressurizing plates 1 and 2, respectively, the lifting lowering member 3 is lowered so that the upper substrate A can approach the lower substrate B.

[0008] The upper and lower pressurizing plates 1 and 2 are formed as a rigid body. The flat pressurizing adsorbing surface 1a facing the surface of the upper substrate A is formed on the bottom surface of the upper pressurizing plate 1, and the flat pressurizing adsorbing surface 2a facing the bottom surface of the lower substrate B is formed on the surface of the lower pressurizing plate 2.

[0009] In this embodiment, the upper pressurizing plate 1 is formed as a rigid body such as metal or ceramic, and the lower pressurizing substrate 2 is formed as a transparent rigid body such as quartz. An ultraviolet light source (not shown) is installed at the lower portion of the lower pressurizing plate 2.

[0010] Suction holes 1b and 2b are formed on the upper and lower pressurizing plates 1 and 2. The suction holes 1b and 2b are linked to a suction source (not shown) through suction paths 1c and 2c formed in the pressurizing plates 1 and 2.

[0011] A suction device 1d that is a curved means is connected to the suction path 1c formed in the upper pressurizing plate 1. The suction device 1d is linked to an air suction source (not shown) through a suction path 3c formed in the lifting/lowering member 3 discussed later.

[0012] The operation of the air suction source (not shown) is controlled by

a control unit (not shown). The air suction source starts air suction in the bonding operation of the upper and lower substrates A and B, thereby adsorbing the surface of the upper substrate A and the bottom surface of the lower substrate B supplied to a transfer means (not shown) in the preceding process on the pressurizing adsorbing surfaces 1a and 2a. In addition, the air suction source cancels air suction after hardening an adhesive C, thereby disconnecting the substrates A and B from the pressurizing adsorbing surfaces 1a and 2a.

[0013] The lifting/lowering member 3 for supporting the upper pressurizing plate 1 is supported by a lifting/lowering device (not shown) such as a driving cylinder. In this embodiment, the lifting/lowering member 3 is also adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction by an adjusting device (not shown).

[0014] The operation of the lifting/lowering device (not shown) is controlled by the control unit. In the initial state, the lifting/lowering device disposes the lifting/lowering member 3 in the top limit position. After the upper and lower substrates A and B are adsorbed on the pressurizing adsorbing surfaces 1a and 2a, the lifting/lowering device downwardly transfers the lifting/lowering member 3 and the upper pressurizing plate 1. When the upper substrate A does not contact the lower substrate B but approaches the lower substrate B with the adhesive C therebetween, the lifting/lowering device stops the lifting/lowering member 3 and the upper pressurizing plate 1. In the downward approach state, the adjusting device (not shown) is manually operated so that only the lifting/lowering member 3 can be upwardly transferred to the initial state after pressurization of the upper and

lower substrates A and B.

[0015] In this embodiment, a concave unit 3a is formed on the bottom surface of the lifting/lowering member 3 facing the upper pressurizing plate 1. The upper pressurizing plate 1 is supported on the center of the concave unit 3a to be freely inclined and transferred with the flexible material 4 therebetween. A closed space 5 is formed by the concave unit 3a and the flexible material 4.

[0016] For example, the flexible material 4 is a thin plate made of metal such as stainless steel and elastically deformable. The flexible material 4 is formed in a frame shape with its center portion opened. The outer circumference of the flexible material 4 is connected to the inner circumference of the concave unit 3a, and the inner circumference of the flexible material 4 is connected to the outer circumference of the upper pressurizing plate 1. When the lifting/lowering member 3 is adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction by the adjusting device (not shown), the upper pressurizing plate 1 follows the lifting/lowering member 3 without an operational delay or error. In this embodiment, the flexible material 4 is disposed to approach the pressurizing adsorbing surface 1a of the upper pressurizing plate 1 as much as possible.

[0017] In addition, a supply path 3b inked to a supply source (not shown) of a fluid 6 such as water or compressed air is formed on the lifting/lowering member 3. After the upper and lower substrates A and B are position-determined, the supply source supplies the fluid 6 to the closed space 5 through the supply path 3b. The flexible material 4 is elastically deformed by rise of the internal pressure of the closed space 5. Therefore, the upper

pressurizing plate 1 is slightly downwardly transferred in micron units to the lower pressurizing plate 2. In this embodiment, cold water having a lower temperature than a set temperature is supplied to the closed space 5 as the fluid 6.

5 [0018] On the other hand, the upper and lower substrates A and B are two substrates having target patterns. An ultraviolet hardening adhesive C is spread in a frame shape on the bottom surface of the upper substrate A, and position-determining marks (not shown) are installed on the outer circumference thereof. Here, one edge is formed by the adhesive C, which
10 is not intended to be limiting. That is, when the upper and lower substrates A and B are formed in a large size, the plurality of edges of the adhesive are arranged between the substrates A and B, for assembling a plurality of liquid crystal panels at the same time.

[0019] The operation of The device for manufacturing the liquid crystal
15 panel will now be described. At the early stage, as indicated by an one-point long dotted line of Fig. 1(a), the lifting/lowering member 3 is maintained in the top limit position. The surface of the upper substrate A is adsorbed on the flat pressurizing adsorbing surface 1a of the upper pressurizing plate 1 and the bottom surface of the lower substrate B is
20 adsorbed on the flat pressurizing adsorbing surface 2a of the fixed lower pressurizing plate 2 by air suction of the air suction source (not shown).

[0020] As indicated by a solid line of Fig. 1(a), the lifting/lowering member 3 is downwardly transferred from the top limit position by the lifting/lowering device (not shown), and thus the upper substrate A is downwardly
25 transferred. The bottom surface of the upper substrate A does not contact

the lower substrate B but approaches the lower substrate B with the adhesive C therebetween.

[0021] In the approach state, as indicated by a two-point long dotted line of Fig. 1(a), when the lifting/lowering member 3 is adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction, namely, in the XYθ direction by the manual operation of the adjusting device (not shown), the upper pressurizing plate 1 follows the lifting/lowering member 3 without an operational delay or error.

[0022] As a result, the upper and lower substrates A and B are precisely position-determined by using the position-determining marks (for example, precision below $\pm 0.5\mu\text{m}$ when the substrates A and B have a diagonal length of 1 to 4 inches (2.54 to 10.56cm)).

[0023] In this embodiment, the flexible material 4 is disposed to approach the pressurizing adsorbing surface 1a of the upper pressurizing plate 1. When the upper and lower substrates A and B are position-determined by adjusting and transferring the upper pressurizing plate 1 in the horizontal direction by the lifting/lowering member 4, although the pressurizing adsorbing surface 1a on which the upper substrate A is adsorbed is more protruded to the lower pressurizing plate 2 than the flexible material 4, moment is not generated and the pressurizing adsorbing surface 1a is not seriously inclined to the flexible material 4. As a result, both substrates A and B can be precisely position-determined.

[0024] After the substrates A and B are position-determined, as shown in Fig. 1(b), in the XYθ direction, the fluid 6 is supplied from the supply source (not shown) to the closed space 5 formed between the supply path 3b of the lifting/lowering member 3 and the flexible material 4.

[0025] When the internal pressure of the closed space 5 reaches an appropriate pressure by pressurizing the upper pressurizing plate 1, the flexible material 4 is elastically deformed to slightly downwardly transfer the upper pressurizing plate 1 in micron units.

5 [0026] When the upper pressurizing plate 1 is slightly downwardly transferred, the adsorbed upper substrate A is slightly downwardly transferred in the Z direction. The bottom surface of the upper substrate A contacts the surface of the lower substrate B adsorbed on the fixed lower pressurizing plate 2 with the adhesive C therebetween. Both substrates A and B are pressurized with a predetermined gap.

[0027] Accordingly, both substrates A and B can be pressurized in micron units to have a predetermined gap without operating the lifting/lowering member 3. As compared with the case of pressurizing both substrates A and B in micron units by mechanically lifting or lowering the lifting/lowering member 3 by the lifting/lowering device (not shown), The device can be simplified in structure.

15 [0028] Here, when the upper substrate A downwardly transferred by the upper pressurizing plate 1 is not completely paralleled in micron units to the lower substrate B adsorbed on the fixed lower pressurizing plate 2, and
20 when the adhesive C formed on the bottom surface of the upper substrate A partially contacts the surface of the lower substrate B by inclination of the upper and lower substrates A and B, the flexible material 4 is elastically deformed to incline and transfer the upper pressurizing plate 1 and the upper substrate A.

25 [0029] Therefore, the bottom surface of the upper substrate A is evenly

pressurized on the flat pressurizing adsorbing surface 1a of the upper pressurizing plate 1 formed as a rigid body along the surface of the lower substrate B. As a result, both substrates A and B can be precisely position-determined, maintained in parallel, and pressurized with a predetermined gap. For example, when the substrates A and B have a diagonal length of 1 to 4 inches (2.54 to 10.56cm), the gap is smaller than $\pm 0.3\mu\text{m}$.

[0030] In a state where both substrates A and B maintain the predetermined gap, ultraviolet rays are irradiated from the ultraviolet light source (not shown) to the ultraviolet hardening adhesive C between the upper and lower substrates A and B through the transparent lower pressurizing plate 2. Therefore, the ultraviolet hardening adhesive C is hardened so that the upper and lower substrates A and B can be bonded without spacers. In addition, the upper and lower substrates A and B are position-determined and pressurized with a predetermined gap by using one apparatus.

[0031] Especially, when cold water having a lower temperature than a set temperature is supplied to the closed space 5 as the fluid 6, the upper and lower substrates A and B are cooled with the upper pressurizing plate 1 therebetween. It is thus possible to prevent deformation of the upper and lower substrates A and B by temperature rise.

[0032] On the other hand, Figs. 2(a) and 2(b) illustrate A device for manufacturing a liquid crystal panel in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. An upper pressurizing plate 1' is fixed not to be movable, and a lower pressurizing plate 2' is supported in a floating island shape on a center of a surface of a lifting/lowering member 3' with a flexible material 4' therebetween. In a state where upper and lower substrates A

and B are adsorbed on flat pressurizing adsorbing surfaces 1a' and 2a' of the pressurizing plates 1' and 2', respectively, the lifting lowering member 3' and the lower pressurizing plate 2' are lifted so that the lower substrate B can approach the upper substrate A. Except this, the structure of Figs. 2(a) and 2(b) is identical to the structure of Figs. 1(a) and 1(b). In addition, a fluid 6' is supplied to a closed space 5' formed between the lifting/lowering member 3' and the flexible material 4', for raising the internal pressure of the closed space 5'. Therefore, the flexible material 4' is elastically deformed so that the lower pressurizing plate 2' can be slightly upwardly transferred toward the upper pressurizing plate 1'.

[0033] Identically to the embodiment of Figs. 1(a) and 1(b), both substrates A and B are precisely position-determined, maintained in parallel, and pressurized to have a predetermined gap.

[0034] In the above embodiment, after the upper and lower substrates A and B are position-determined, the flexible material 4 is elastically deformed by rise of the internal pressure of the closed space 5, and thus one pressurizing plate 1 is slightly downwardly transferred toward the other pressurizing plate 2. It is not intended to be limiting. For example, the flexible material 4 is elastically deformed by mechanically lifting or lowering the lifting/lowering member 3 in micron units, so that one pressurizing plate 1 and the other substrate A can be slightly inclined and transferred and the upper and lower substrates A and B can be pressurized with a predetermined gap.

[0035] In the above embodiment, the upper pressurizing plate 1 is supported to be adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction to the

lower pressurizing plate 2 by the lifting/lowering member 3. It is not intended to be limiting. For example, the upper and lower substrates A and B are position-determined by supporting the lower pressurizing plate 2 to be adjusted and transferred in the horizontal direction to the lifting/lowering member 3 and the upper pressurizing plate 1, and adjusting and transferring the lower pressurizing plate 2 in the horizontal direction. In addition, in the above embodiment, the ultraviolet rays are irradiated to harden the ultraviolet hardening adhesive C between the upper and lower substrates A and B, which is not intended to be limiting. For example, an adhesive made of a thermally-tempered resin can be heated and hardened.

[0036]

[Effect of the Invention] As discussed earlier, in the present invention of Claim1, one pressurizing plate is transferred in the up/down direction by the lifting/lowering member, and one substrate adsorbed on the pressurizing adsorbing surface of the pressurizing plate approaches the other substrate adsorbed on the pressurizing adsorbing surface of the other pressurizing plate. In the approach state, the flexible material is elastically deformed to slightly incline and transfer one pressurizing plate and one substrate. Thus, one substrate is evenly pressurized on the flat pressurizing adsorbing surface of the pressurizing plate formed as a rigid body along the surface of the other substrate. Accordingly, both substrates can be precisely position-determined, maintained in parallel, and pressurized with a predetermined gap. In the conventional art, when the substrates are pressurized, the center portions of the substrates which are not supported by the spacers are caved not to obtain a predetermined gap. In the present

invention, the gap can be precisely formed between the substrates without using the spacers.

[0037] In addition to the structure of Claim 1, in the present invention of Claim 2, the flexible material is elastically deformed by rise of the internal pressure of the closed space, so that one pressurizing plate can be downwardly transferred to the other pressurizing plate in micron units. Both substrates are pressurized in micron units to have a predetermined gap without operating the lifting/lowering member. Therefore, as compared with the case of pressurizing both substrates in micron units by mechanically lifting or lowering the lifting/lowering member, The device can be simplified and miniaturized in structure. Also, manufacturing expenses of The device can be cut down.

[0038] In addition to the structure of Claim 1 or 2, in the present invention of Claim 3, the upper and lower substrates are cooled with one pressurizing plate therebetween. It is thus possible to prevent deformation of the upper and lower substrates by temperature rise.

[0039] In addition to the structure of Claim 1, 2 or 3, in the present invention of Claim 4, the upper and lower substrates are precisely position-determined by adjusting and transferring any one of the pressurizing plates in the horizontal direction to the other plate. Moreover, the upper and lower substrates can be position-determined and pressurized with a predetermined gap by using one apparatus.

[Description of Drawings]

[Fig. 1] is a longitudinal front view illustrating A device for manufacturing a liquid crystal panel in accordance with a first embodiment of the present

invention, wherein Fig. 1(a) shows position-determination of both substrates and Fig. 1(b) shows pressurization of both substrates.

[Fig. 2] is a longitudinal front view illustrating A device for manufacturing a liquid crystal panel in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention, wherein Fig. 2(a) shows position-determination of both substrates and Fig. 2(b) shows pressurization of both substrates.

[Explanation of Reference Numerals] A and B substrates, C adhesive, 1 and 2 pressurizing plates, 1a and 2a pressurizing adsorbing surfaces, 3 lifting/lowering member, 4 flexible material, 5 closed space, 6 fluid

【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 上下2枚の基板（A、B）を加圧して所定のギャップまで潰しながら、両基板（A、B）間の接着剤（C）を硬化させて貼着する液晶パネル製造装置において、

前記基板（A、B）を別々に吸着保持する平坦な加圧吸着面（1a、2a）が形成された剛体からなる上下一対の加圧板（1、2）と、これら加圧板（1、2）のどちらか一方を他方に対して上下方向へ往復動自在に支持する昇降部材（3）とを備え、この昇降部材（3）に一方の加圧板（1）を可撓性材料（4）の弾性変形により傾斜移動自在に支持したことを特徴とする液晶パネル製造装置。

【請求項2】 前記昇降部材（3）と可撓性材料（4）との間に閉空間（5）を区画形成し、この閉空間（5）の内圧上昇により一方の加圧板（1）が他方の加圧板（2）へ向け上下動するように可撓性材料（4）を弾性変形させた請求項1記載の液晶パネル製造装置。

【請求項3】 前記閉空間（5）内に、温度制御された流体（6）を供給して、この閉空間（5）の内圧を上昇させた請求項1または2記載の液晶パネル製造装置。

【請求項4】 前記一方の加圧板（1）か又は他方の加圧板（2）のどちらか一方を他方に対して水平方向へ調整移動自在に支持した請求項1、2または3記載の液晶パネル製造装置。

【発明の詳細な説明】

【0001】

【発明の属する技術分野】本発明は、例えば液晶プロジェクター用のパネルなどのような2枚の基板の間には接着剤以外の場所にスペーサーが散布されない液晶パネルの製造装置に関する。詳しくは、上下2枚の基板を精度良く位置合わせし、その精度のままで基板を加圧して所定のギャップまで潰しながら、両基板間の接着剤を硬化させてスペーサーを介在させずに貼着する液晶パネル製造装置に関する。

【0002】

【従来の技術】通常の液晶パネルは、基板の間に接着剤を棒状に塗布し、それ以外にも、スペーサーを全面に亘って散布することにより、両基板の押圧のみで両者の間隔が容易に所定のギャップとなるようにしている。一方、特に液晶プロジェクター用のパネルでは、それを透過した画像が拡大されるため、画面として使用する領域内にスペーサーがあると一緒に拡大されて邪魔となるので、接着剤の塗布位置より内側にはスペーサーを散布できない。

【0003】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】しかし乍ら、このような状況下において、薄板やフィルムなどの可撓性材料により、一方の基板を、固定された他方の基板に向けて加圧した場合には、基板の中央部分をスペーサーにより支

持できないため、加圧すると基板の中央部分が凹んで、パネルの中央部が凹面になってままの状態では接着されてしまい、その結果、所定のギャップが得られないという問題がある。

【0004】本発明のうち請求項1記載の発明は、両基板を精度良く位置合わせして平行に保持したまま所定ギャップまで確実に押し潰すことを目的としたものである。請求項2記載の発明は、請求項1に記載の発明の目的に加えて、昇降部材を作動させずに両基板をミクロン単位で所定ギャップに潰すことを目的としたものである。請求項3記載の発明は、請求項1または2に記載の発明の目的に加えて、上下基板の温度上昇による変形を防止することを目的としたものである。請求項4記載の発明は、請求項1、2または3に記載の発明の目的に加えて、上下基板の位置決めと所定のギャップまで潰しを一台の装置で行うことを目的としたものである。

【0005】

【課題を解決するための手段】前述した目的を達成するために、本発明のうち請求項1記載の発明は、基板を別々に吸着保持する平坦な加圧吸着面が形成された剛体からなる上下一対の加圧板と、これら加圧板のどちらか一方を他方に対して上下方向へ往復動自在に支持する昇降部材とを備え、この昇降部材に一方の加圧板を可撓性材料の弾性変形により傾斜移動自在に支持したことを特徴とするものである。請求項2記載の発明は、請求項1記載の発明の構成に、前記昇降部材と可撓性材料との間に閉空間を区画形成し、この閉空間の内圧上昇により一方の加圧板が他方の加圧板へ向け上下動するように可撓性材料を弾性変形させた構成を加えたことを特徴とする。請求項3記載の発明は、請求項1または2記載の発明の構成に、前記閉空間内に、温度制御された流体を供給して、この閉空間の内圧を上昇させた構成を加えたことを特徴とする。請求項4記載の発明は、請求項1、2または3記載の発明の構成に、前記一方の加圧板か又は他方の加圧板のどちらか一方を他方に対して水平方向へ調整移動自在に支持した構成を加えたことを特徴とする。

【0006】

【作用】請求項1の発明は、昇降部材により一方の加圧板を上下動させて、その加圧吸着面に吸着保持した一方の基板が、他方の加圧板の加圧吸着面に吸着保持した他方の基板と接近し、この接近状態のままで可撓性材料を弾性変形させて一方の加圧板及び一方の基板を僅かに傾斜移動することにより、剛体からなる加圧板の平坦な加圧吸着面で一方の基板が他方の基板の面に習って均等に加圧されるものである。請求項2の発明は、請求項1記載の構成に対して、前記昇降部材と可撓性材料との間に閉空間を区画形成し、この閉空間の内圧上昇により一方の加圧板が他方の加圧板へ向け上下動するように可撓性材料を弾性変形させた構成を追加したので、閉空間の内圧上昇に伴って可撓性材料を弾性変形させることによ

り、一方の加圧板が他方の加圧板へ向けミクロン単位で下動する。請求項3の発明は、請求項1または2記載の構成に対して、前記閉空間内に、温度制御された流体を供給して、この閉空間の内圧を上昇させた構成を追加したので、一方の加圧板を介して上下基板が冷却される。請求項4の発明は、請求項1、2または3記載の構成に対して、前記一方の加圧板か又は他方の加圧板のどちらか一方を他方に対して水平方向へ調整移動自在に支持した構成を追加したので、一方の加圧板か又は他方の加圧板のどちらか一方を他方に対して水平方向へ調整移動させることにより、上下基板が精度良く位置合わせされ、その後、この位置合わせ状態のままで上下基板を加圧して所定ギャップに潰される。

【0007】

【発明の実施の形態】以下、本発明の実施例を図面に基づいて説明する。この実施例は、図1(a)及び(b)に示す如く、上方の加圧板1が昇降部材3の下面中央に可撓性材料4を介して浮島状に支持されると共に、下方の加圧板2が定盤として移動不能に固定配備され、これら加圧板1、2の平坦な加圧吸着面1a、2aに、上下2枚のガラス製基板A、Bが夫々吸着保持した状態で昇降部材3を下降させることにより、上基板Aが下基板Bに接近する場合を示すものである。

【0008】上方の加圧板1及び下方の加圧板2は、夫々剛体で構成され、上方の加圧板1の下面には、上基板Aの上面と対向する平坦な加圧吸着面1aを形成し、下方の加圧板2の上面には、下基板Bの下面と対向する平坦な加圧吸着面2aを形成する。

【0009】本実施例の場合には、上方の加圧板1を例えば金属やセラミックなどの剛体で構成し、下方の加圧板2を、例えば石英などの透明な剛体で構成しており、更に下方の加圧板2の下方には、紫外線の光源(図示せず)を配設している。

【0010】これら上下の加圧板1、2には、吸引孔1b、2bを開穿孔し、これら吸引孔1b、2bが加圧板1、2の内部に形成した吸気通路1c、2cを介して吸気源(図示せず)に連通される。

【0011】上方の加圧板1内に形成した吸気通路1cは、本実施例の場合、屈曲自在な吸気管1dが接続され、この吸気管1dは、後述する昇降部材3に開穿孔された吸気通路3cを通して吸気源(図示せず)に連通している。

【0012】上記吸気源(図示せず)は、コントロール部(図示せず)により作動制御され、上下基板A、Bの貼り合わせ時には吸気を開始することにより、前工程の移送手段(図示せず)で供給された上基板Aの上面及び下基板Bの下面を夫々加圧吸着面1a、2aに吸着して移動不能に保持し、後述する接着剤Cの硬化後には、吸気を解除して加圧吸着面1a、2aから基板A、Bを取り外し可能にしている。

【0013】更に、上方の加圧板1を支持する昇降部材3は、例えば駆動シリンダーなどの昇降機構(図示せず)により支持され、本実施例では更に調整機構(図示せず)により水平方向へ調整移動自在に支持される。

【0014】この昇降機構(図示せず)は、上記コントロール部により作動制御され、その初期状態で昇降部材3を上限位置に待機させており、前記加圧吸着面1a、2aに上下基板A、Bが吸着保持された後に昇降部材3及び上方の加圧板1を下動させ、上基板Aが接着剤Cを介して下基板Bと非接触状態ではあるものの可能な限り接近した位置にて下動停止させる。この下動接近状態において上記調整機構(図示せず)が手動操作され、上下基板A、Bの加圧終了後には、昇降部材3のみを上動させて初期状態に戻る。

【0015】また、上記昇降部材3は、本実施例の場合、上方の加圧板1と対向する下面に凹部3aを形成し、この凹部3aの中央に可撓性材料4を介して上方の加圧板1を傾斜移動自在に支持し、これら凹部3aと可撓性材料4とで閉空間5を区画形成する。

【0016】この可撓性材料4は、例えばステンレスなどの金属からなる弾性変形可能な薄板で中央部分を開口した額縁状に形成され、その外周縁を凹部3aの内周面に連結すると共に内周縁を上方の加圧板1の外周面に連結しており、前記調整機構(図示せず)によって昇降部材3が水平方向へ調整移動した際には、その動作遅れや動きに誤差なく上方の加圧板1を従動させるように構成する。本実施例の場合には、上方の加圧板1の加圧吸着面1aに可能な限り接近させて可撓性材料4を配置している。

【0017】更に、前記昇降部材3には、例えば水や圧縮空気など流体6の供給源(図示せず)と連通する供給路3bを開穿孔する。この供給源は、上下基板A、Bの位置合わせ完了後に上記供給路3bを通して前記閉空間5内に流体6を供給し、該閉空間5の内圧が上昇して可撓性材料4を弾性変形させることにより、下方の加圧板2へ向けて僅かに、詳しくはミクロン単位で下動させるように構成する。本実施例の場合には、流体6として温度制御された冷水などの設定温度より低いものを閉空間5内に供給している。

【0018】一方、上下基板A、Bは、例えば所望のパターンが形成された2枚の基板であり、その一方の基板、本実施例の場合には上基板Aの下面に、スペーサー入りの紫外線硬化型接着剤Cを棒状に塗布し、液晶パネルとして支障のない外周部には、位置合わせ用マーク(図示せず)が夫々設けられる。なお、図示したものは、接着剤Cによる棒が一つしか存在しないが、これに限定されず、上下基板A、Bが大型であれば、その間に接着剤Cの棒を複数配置させて同時に複数の液晶パネルを同時に組み立てることもできる。

【0019】次に、斯かる液晶パネル製造装置の作動に

ついて説明する。先ず、初期状態では図1(a)の一点鎖線に示す如く、昇降部材3が上限位置で待機している。この状態で吸気源(図示せず)から吸引によって、上方の加圧板1の平坦な加圧吸着面1aに上基板Aの上面が吸引保持されると共に、固定配備された下方の加圧板2の平坦な加圧吸着面2aに下基板Bの下面が吸引保持される。

【0020】その後、昇降機構(図示せず)により昇降部材3が図1(a)の実線に示す如く、その上限待機位置から下動し、これに伴って上基板Aも下動し、その下面が接着剤Cを介して下基板Bと非接触状態ではあるものの可能な限り接近する。

【0021】この接近状態で、調整機構(図示せず)の手動操作により、昇降部材3を図1(a)の二点鎖線に示す如く水平方向、詳しくはXYθ方向へ調整移動すれば、可撓性材料4を介してその動作遅れや動きに誤差なく上方の加圧板1が追従する。

【0022】その結果、上下基板A、Bの夫々に有る位置合わせマークを利用して両基板A、Bが精度良く、例えば基板A、Bの対角長が1~4インチ(2.54~10.56cm)程度の場合には±0.5μm以下の精度で位置合わせされる。

【0023】本実施例の場合には、上方の加圧板1の加圧吸着面1aに接近させて可撓性材料4を配置したので、昇降部材4で上方の加圧板1を水平方向へ調整移動して上下基板A、Bの位置合わせする際に、上基板Aを吸着保持する加圧吸着面1aが可撓性材料4より下方の加圧板2へ向け突出するものに比べてモーメントが発生せず、可撓性材料4で加圧吸着面1aが大きく傾斜しない。従って、両基板A、Bを正確に位置合わせできる。

【0024】この位置合わせが完了した後は、XYθ方向にはそのままの状態、図1(b)に示す如く供給源(図示せず)から昇降部材3の供給路3bを通して、可撓性材料4との間に区画形成された閉空間5に流体6が供給される。

【0025】これにより、閉空間5の内圧が上昇して、上方の加圧板1が下方へ押圧され、適宜内圧に達すると、可撓性材料4が弾性変形して上方の加圧板1を僅か、詳しくはミクロン単位で下動させる。

【0026】この上方の加圧板1の僅かな下動により、これに吸着保持された上基板AもZ方向へ微小距離下動し、この上基板Aの下面が接着剤Cを介して、固定配備された下方の加圧板2に吸引保持した下基板Bの上面に接触すると共に、これら両基板A、Bをそれらの間隔が所定ギャップとなるまで潰す。

【0027】その結果、昇降部材3を作動させずに両基板A、Bをミクロン単位で所定ギャップに潰せる。従って、前記昇降機構(図示せず)による機械的な昇降部材3の上下動で両基板A、Bをミクロン単位で所定ギャップに潰すものに比べ、装置全体を簡素化できる。

【0028】この際、上方の加圧板1で下動にした上基板Aと、固定配備された下方の加圧板2に吸引保持した下基板Bの上面とがミクロン単位で完全な平行ではなく、上下基板A、Bの傾斜により最初は上基板A下面の接着剤Cが下基板Bの上面に対して部分的に接触する場合でも、この部分的な接触に引き続き、更に可撓性材料4が弾性変形して上方の加圧板1及び上基板Aが傾斜移動する。

【0029】それにより、剛体からなる上方の加圧板1の平坦な加圧吸着面1aで上基板Aの下面が下基板Bの上面に習って均等に加圧される。その結果、両基板A、Bを精度良く位置合わせして平行に保持したまま所定ギャップまで確実に押し潰せる。このギャップ精度は、例えば基板A、Bの対角長が1~4インチ(2.54~10.56cm)程度の場合、±0.3μm以下である。

【0030】そして、このような所定ギャップを維持したまま状態で、透明な下方の加圧板2を通して紫外線の光源(図示せず)から紫外線が、上下基板A、B間の紫外線硬化型接着剤Cに照射される。従って、上記紫外線硬化型接着剤Cが硬化してスペーサーを介在させずに上下基板A、Bが貼着される。更に、上下基板A、Bの位置決めと所定のギャップまで潰しが一台の装置によりできる。

【0031】特に、前記閉空間5に供給する流体6として、温度制御された冷水などの設定温度より低いものを使用した場合には、上方の加圧板1を介して上基板A及び下基板Bが冷却され、これら上下基板A、Bの温度上昇による変形を防止できるという利点がある。

【0032】一方、図2(a)及び(b)に示すものは、本発明の他の実施例であり、このものは、前記上方の加圧板1'が定盤として移動不能に固定配備されると共に、下方の加圧板2'が昇降部材3'の上面中央に可撓性材料4'を介して浮島状に支持され、これら加圧板1'、2'の平坦な加圧吸着面1a'、2a'に、上下基板A、Bを夫々吸着保持した状態で昇降部材3'及び下方の加圧板2'を上昇させることにより、下基板Bが上基板Aに接近した構成が、前記図1(a)及び(b)に示した実施例とは異なり、それ以外の構成は図1

(a)及び(b)に示した実施例と同じものである。更に図示例では、昇降部材3'と可撓性材料4'との間に区画形成した閉空間5'に流体6'が供給されて内圧を上昇させることにより、この可撓性材料4'が弾性変形して下方の加圧板2'を上方の加圧板1'へ向け僅かに上動させている。

【0033】従って、図2(a)及び(b)に示すものも、前記図1(a)及び(b)に示した実施例と同様に、両基板A、Bを精度良く位置合わせして平行に保持したまま所定ギャップまで確実に押し潰せるという作用効果が得られる。

【0034】尚、前記実施例では、上下基板A、Bの位

置合わせ完了後において閉空間5の内圧を上昇させることにより、可撓性材料4が弾性変形して一方の加圧板1を他方の加圧板2へ向け僅かに下動させたが、これに限定されず、昇降部材3を機械的にミクロン単位で更に上下動して可撓性材料4を弾性変形させることにより、一方の加圧板1及び一方の基板Aが僅かに傾斜移動して、上下基板A、Bを所定のギャップまで加圧するようにしても良い。

【0035】また前示実施例では、昇降部材3により上方の加圧板1を、下方の加圧板2に対して水平方向へ調整移動自在に支持したが、これに限定されず、下方の加圧板2を昇降部材3及び上方の加圧板1に対して水平方向へ調整移動自在に支持し、下方の加圧板2を水平方向へ調整移動させることにより、上下基板A、Bの位置合わせしても良い。更に前示実施例では、上下基板A、B間の紫外線硬化型接着剤Cに紫外線を照射して硬化させたが、これに限定されず、それ以外に例えば熱硬化性樹脂からなる接着剤を加熱して硬化させるなど、他の接着剤を使用しても良い。

【0036】

【発明の効果】以上説明したように、本発明のうち請求項1記載の発明は、昇降部材により一方の加圧板を上下動させて、その加圧吸着面に吸着保持した一方の基板が、他方の加圧板の加圧吸着面に吸着保持した他方の基板と接近し、この接近状態のままで可撓性材料を弾性変形させて一方の加圧板及び一方の基板を僅かに傾斜移動することにより、剛体からなる加圧板の平坦な加圧吸着面で一方の基板が他方の基板の面に習って均等に加圧されるので、両基板を精度良く位置合わせして平行に保持したまま所定ギャップまで確実に押し潰すことができる。従って、加圧するとスペーサーで支持されない基板の中央部分が凹んで所定のギャップが得られない従来のものに比べ、スペーサーによる支持がなくても上下基板間のギャップを精密に形成できる。

【0037】請求項2の発明は、請求項1の発明の効果に加えて、閉空間の内圧上昇に伴って可撓性材料を弾性変形させることにより、一方の加圧板が他方の加圧板へ向けミクロン単位で下動するので、昇降部材を作動させずに両基板をミクロン単位で所定ギャップに潰す。従って、機械的な昇降部材の上下動で両基板をミクロン単位で所定ギャップに潰すものに比べ、装置全体を簡素化できて小型化が可能になると共に製造コストの低減も図れる。

【0038】請求項3の発明は、請求項1または2の発明の効果に加えて、一方の加圧板を介して上下基板が冷却されるので、上下基板の温度上昇による変形を防止できる。

【0039】請求項4の発明は、請求項1、2または3の発明の効果に加えて、一方の加圧板か又は他方の加圧板のどちらか一方を他方に対して水平方向へ調整移動させることにより、上下基板が精度良く位置合わせされ、その後、この位置合わせ状態のままで上下基板を加圧して所定ギャップに潰されるので、上下基板の位置決めと所定のギャップまで潰しを一台の装置で行うことができる。

【図面の簡単な説明】

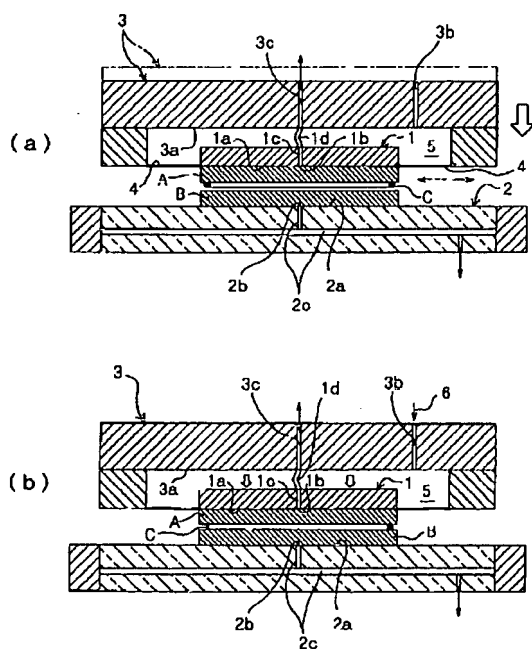
【図1】 本発明の一実施例を示す液晶パネル製造装置の縦断正面図であり、(a)は両基板の位置合わせ時を示し、(b)は両基板の加圧時を示している。

【図2】 本発明の他の実施例を示す液晶パネル製造装置の縦断正面図であり、(a)は両基板の位置合わせ時を示し、(b)は両基板の加圧時を示している。

【符号の説明】

A, B 基板	C 接着剤
1, 2 加圧板	1 a, 2 a
加圧吸着面	
3 昇降部材	4 可撓性材料
5 閉空間	6 流体

【図1】



【図2】

